



TO ASSESS BUYING PRACTICES OF LITERATE FEMALE HOMEMAKERS (20-40 YEARS) IN CHANDIGARH

Boparai. R.¹ | Navreet²

¹ Assistant Professor, Government Home Science College, Chandigarh.

² Student, Government Home Science College, Chandigarh.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Food is essential to the sustenance of life. Quality of food is very important as it is directly related to health. All consumers want to get maximum quantity of a commodity for as low price as possible. This attitude of consumers in conjunction with intension of traders and manufacturer to increase profit margin as high as possible generates a vicious circle. So the quantity of commodity gets reduced through many malpractices like adulteration. The best way to avoid these problems is prevention. Buying practices of female homemakers who are generally responsible for purchasing food items for home can play a pivotal role. **Methodology:** In present study, literate female homemakers (age group 20-40 years), residing in urban area of Chandigarh, were selected conveniently and surveyed. **Results:** In present study, buying practices of literate female homemakers became better with the increase in education level among them; but there was a little change in their awareness regarding certification marks and nutritional label. As the education level increases literate female homemaker used to buy food items from malls and supermarkets. Majority of the subjects selected price as most affecting factor while purchasing food items; but female homemakers with high education level were more attracted towards better quality products instead of low priced food items. Majority of the subjects check MRP and manufacturing and expiry date but did not have the habit of checking food certification marks and nutritional label.

KEYWORDS: Buying practices, Certification marks and Nutritional label.

INTRODUCTION:

Food is essential to the sustenance of life. Food may be defined as anything eaten or drunk, which meets the needs for energy, body building, regulation and protection of the body^[1]. Quality of food is an extremely important aspect of human life as it is directly related to health issue of a person. The productivity and health of population depend on the nature of the food they consume and its wholesomeness in terms of their nutritive value^[2]. All consumers want to get the maximum quantity of a commodity for as low price as possible. This attitude of the consumers in conjunction with the intension of the traders as well as the manufacturer to increase the profit margin as high as possible generates a vicious circle. So the quantity of the commodity gets reduced through many malpractices like adulteration. In order to protect the consumer from malpractices adopted by many consumers and traders, government makes various food laws. But the best way to avoid these problems is prevention. Consumer's best defense is knowledge. Buying practices of consumer can play a pivotal role. Consumer can begin by taking an interest in their buying practices as proper awareness at this step can protect from harmful effects of malpractices. The place of purchasing food items is one of the important aspects. The factors that affects the purchase of food items like price, taste, brand, accessibility etc. also guide the consumer because a price conscious consumer tries to buy cheaper food and may ends in buying adulterated food item. Purchasing the food items as loose or packed also determines the quality of food items as loose food item is open to dust, microorganisms and many other types of contaminations. Knowledge regarding food certification marks can protect the consumer from buying non-standardized food products which are more susceptible to adulteration. Checking MRP and manufacturing & expiry date provides the indication about when the food item is made and remain safe for consumption till which date under particular conditions. Knowledge regarding nutritional label of food is also very important. Nutritional label tells what the food item contains. The knowledge of the ingredients through which food item is made can help to detect adulterants. In India, generally it is the responsibility of the female homemakers to buy and prepare the food for family and in the city like Chandigarh where women literacy rate between the age group of 15-49 years is 83.2%^[3], buying practices of literate female homemakers can play a leading role. Thus the present study aims to assess buying practices of literate female homemakers (20-40 years) in Chandigarh.

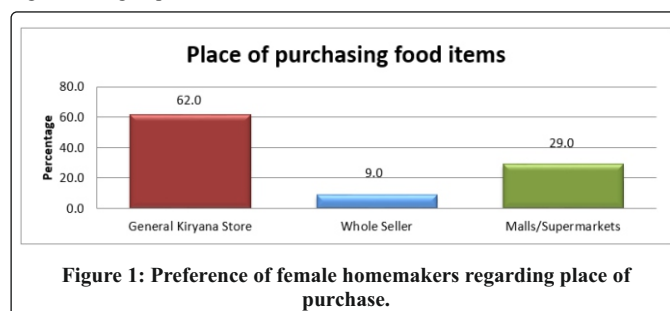
METHODOLOGY:

In present study, literate female homemakers (age group 20-40 years), residing in urban area of Chandigarh, were selected conveniently and surveyed.

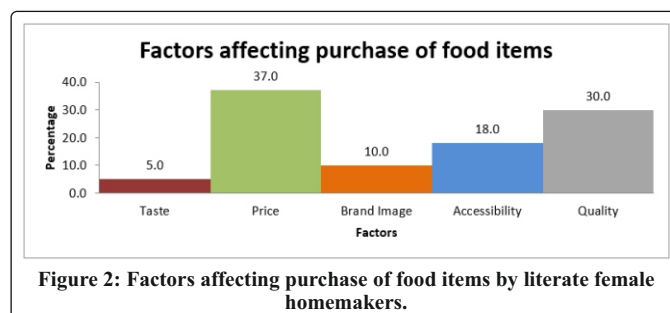
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

46% subjects were in the age group of 20-30 years and 54% subjects were in the age group of 30-40 years. Out of total subjects, 22% (n=22) were educated till matric (Primary, 8th and 10th), 8% (n=8) were educated till 12th, 30% (n=30) were educated till graduation, 40% (n=40) had educated level of post graduation and above. All the subjects knew about the adulteration of food items. All subjects were aware that adulteration in food items has harmful effects on health. Out of total subjects 14% (n=14) had monthly income between Rs. 10000-20000, 27% (n=27) between Rs. 20000-30000, 30% (n=30) between Rs. 30000-40000, and 29% (n=29) had monthly income between Rs. 40000-50000. In this study all the

respondents belong to low and middle income group. No respondent belonged to high income group.



In the present study, most of the subjects prefer kirana stores for purchasing food items. kirana shopkeeper may develop a friendly relationship with regular customers and they can buy food items from stores on credit basis. Easy accessibility may be one of the reasons due to which female homemakers buy food items from kirana store. Most of the subjects (62%) used to buy the food items from the kirana stores. Study also showed significant difference between female homemakers with low and high education level regarding their preference towards place of purchase when Chi-square test was applied (p-value=0.002). As the education level among female homemakers increases their preference towards malls and supermarket also increases. In present study the results were in accordance with the study conducted in 2010 among 300 respondents in Varanasi to assess the impact of knowledge practice for food safety in urban area. Authors observed that large number of females were buying food items from local market instead of supermarkets. They found that 69.8% females used to purchase food items from local market and only 1% from supermarket^[4].



In present study, price of food item was found to be the most important factor while purchasing. Usually homemakers search for price information and have an acceptable price range. Quality is one of the most important factors that affect the purchase of food items. Consumers are willing to pay for improved food quality.

With the increase of education level among female homemakers, their preference towards quality and brand image of product increases. But there is no significant difference between the female homemakers having low and high education level with regard to the factors affecting their purchase of food items (p value=0.164). Similar results were seen in the study conducted in 2011 in 68.5% households of rural area of Wardha district to study buying practices and prevalence of adulteration in selected food items. Wives (home-makers) were buying the grocery for home. Only price was the important factor while buying the grocery^[5].

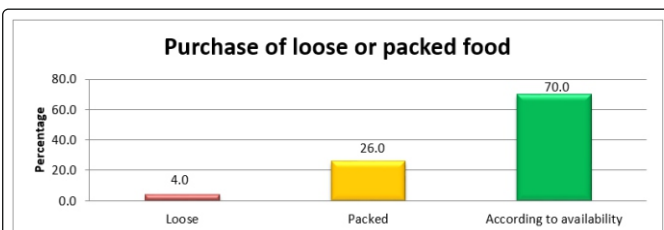


Figure 3: Preference of literate female homemakers towards loose or packed food items.

Most of the subjects (70%) used to purchase the food items as loose or packed according to availability and only 26% always used to purchase packed food products. This may be due to lack of nutritional knowledge among literate female homemakers. But significant difference was observed between female homemakers with low and high education level regarding their preference towards loose or packed food items when Chi-square test was applied (p -value= 0.0001). Similar results were seen in study conducted in 2016 in rural area of Bhilai to assess the knowledge of homemakers regarding food adulteration. Authors observed that only 20% of homemakers always purchased packed food. This might be due to the reason that they had poor knowledge about adulteration of loose food items or they might belong to low income group due to which they prefer loose food items which are cheaper^[6].

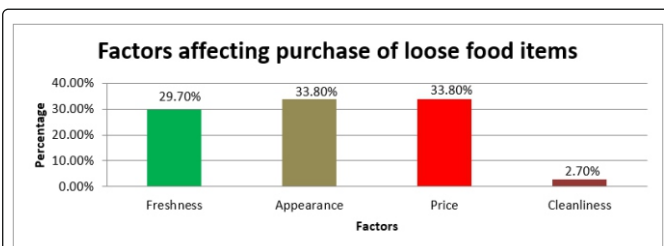


Figure 4: Factors affecting purchase of loose food items

Eating fresh food is beneficial for health as some of the nutrients of food are lost during processing and storage. Appearance of food is one of the important factors while purchasing loose food items. Color, shape, firmness, texture contributes to appearance of food item. Price is also an important factor as some consumers estimate the quality of food item through its price and consumers can change their brand and quantity if they find the prices very high. In a study conducted to investigate the magnitude of food adulteration during 1995–2011 and consumer awareness in Dhaka city, 96 residents were surveyed. Consumers considered expiry date and freshness as the best criteria while buying packaged and open food items respectively. Stale or rotten food was the most commonly mentioned form of adulteration by respondents^[7].

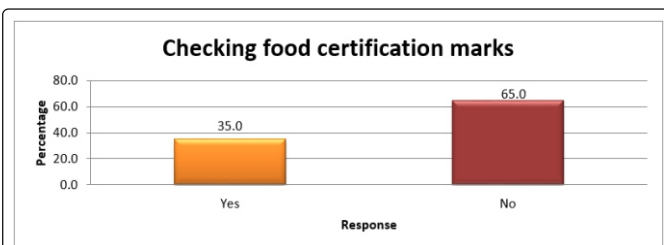


Figure 5: Checking certification marks by literate female homemakers.

In present study most of the subjects did not check the certification marks while buying the food items. But highly significant difference was observed between female homemakers with low and high education level regarding checking of food certification marks (p -value= .0001). A study conducted in 2018 among 100 respondents to assess awareness about food adulteration, also supports the results of present study. Only 7% of the study subjects were illiterate. Good practices like checking of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) logo (90%), AgMark logo (76%) and nutrition label (65%) were lacking among the majority^[8].



Figure 6: Knowledge of literate female homemakers about food certification marks.

The results revealed that most of the subjects had knowledge about 3-4 certification marks. Certification marks are not the part of curriculum in studies except some subjects in particular courses. Subjects knew about only those certification marks that they had studied in lower classes (8th or 10th) like AgMark and ISI. Besides this the people who are related to agriculture have more knowledge about certification marks like AgMark, FPO and MPO. Similar results were seen in a study conducted in 2009 in Jorhat town of Assam by selecting 120 women consumers to find out the awareness of women consumers regarding food safety. Both the low and middle income groups had low knowledge about food certification marks^[9].

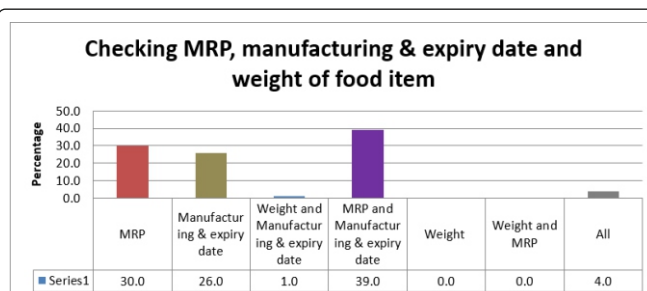


Figure 7: Checking of MRP, manufacturing & expiry date and weight by literate female homemakers.

In present study most of the subjects used to check MRP and manufacturing & expiry date. MRP shows the price of the food item. In a study conducted in 2015 in Bhubaneswar city to examine knowledge and practice related to food safety among women responsible for preparing food at the home level, 110 women were selected as the sample. The study showed that the respondents lack food safety knowledge. Only 42.72 % women used to check the expiry date of the food product before using it^[10].

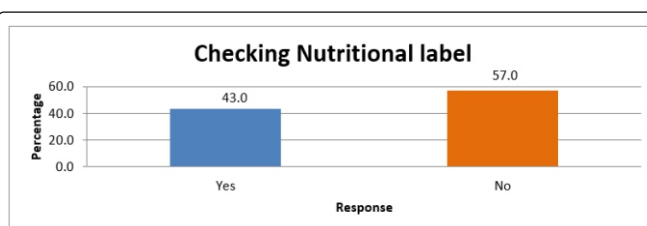


Figure 8: Checking nutritional label by literate female homemakers while purchasing food items.

In present study, nutrient information on labels was not often read by subjects and this may be due to either lack of nutritional knowledge among literate female homemakers or the information may be too technical for them to understand. Significant difference was observed between female homemakers with low and high education level regarding checking nutritional label (p -value= 0.005). In a study conducted by Singla, M. (2010) to study the usage and understanding of food and nutritional labels among Indian consumers, 100 respondents were surveyed from two superstores located in New Delhi. The study revealed that food labels were read by the consumers for brand comparisons and not for consulting nutritional information. Difficult terminology, small font size and inability to understand nutritional labels were the major problems encountered by the consumers. Television, friends, magazines were commonly used for assessing nutritional information. Consumers with special dietary needs used nutritional labels regularly^[11].

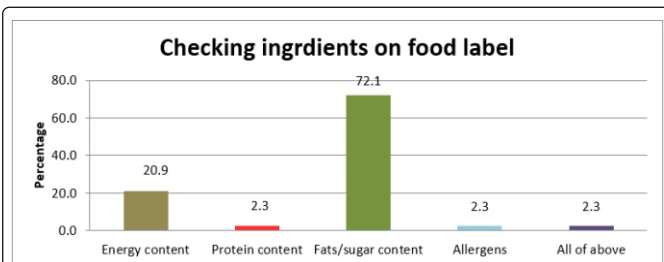


Figure 9: Ingredients checked by literate female homemakers on package of food item while purchasing it.

Majority of the subjects (72.2%) regardless of their education level used to check fat/sugar content of food items while purchasing. Weight control can be the major reason behind this. Study conducted in 2014 among 1832 consumers in New Delhi and Hyderabad to study use of food label information by urban consumers also supported the results of present study. About 99% of the study participants were educated. Authors observed that women and girls concerned about 'fat' and 'sugar' intake used to read the nutrition facts panel^[12].

CONCLUSION:

In present study, the buying practices became better with the increase in education level of literate female homemakers; but there was a little change in the awareness of literate female homemakers regarding certification marks and nutritional label. As the education level increases literate female homemaker were attracted towards malls and supermarkets and used to buy food items from malls and supermarkets. Female homemakers with high education level used to buy packed food; but most of the females were buying food items as loose or packed according to availability. This may be due to their ignorance about the adulteration of food items, ignorance towards the manufacturing date & expiry date, ingredients, nutritive value and certification marks, ignorance towards the microbial contamination of loose food items etc. Majority of the subjects selected price as most affecting factor while purchasing food items; but female homemakers with high education level were more attracted towards better quality products instead of low priced food items. Majority of the subjects did not have the habit of checking food certification marks. Majority of the subjects used to check MRP and manufacturing and expiry date of food item while purchasing it. In present study, nutrient information on labels was not often read by subjects and this may be due to either lack of nutritional knowledge among literate female homemakers or the information may be too technical for them to understand.

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